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PRESS RELEASE: EMBARGOED UNTIL 7.00 p.m., 24th JUNE, 1970.

FROM: THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN.

SUBJECT: RAIL STANDARDIZATION.

Tomorrow in Canberra the Premiers and Treasurers of all the States will meet with the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer to decide how the Commonwealth will pay back to the States the monies raised in Income Tax which the States will use for services, and how much money the States will be borrowing, and at what rates of interest, for their major construction and housing programmes.

The decisions made at the Conference will have far reaching consequences for everyone. But tonight I'd like to speak about just one item which will come under discussion - Rail Standardization.

Adelaide is now the only capital city in Australia not connected to the standard gauge railway system.

At the moment, when goods are railed to Sydney, Perth, or Brisbane, they are sent by broad gauge rail transport to Port Pirie where either the trucks have their bogies exchanged to standard gauge, or the goods they carry are cross-loaded into standard gauge trucks. For South Australia's industries this not only wastes time but also significantly increases costs.

It is essential that we in South Australia can compete with the other States industrially - and that means that the speed, efficiency and costs of our transport systems must be competitive. We just can't afford now to have a bottle-neck like this at Port Pirie.

Further, it's now 21 years since the Commonwealth agreed to undertake Rail Standardization in this State. 21 years! It's certainly not worth having a party about that. The other State capitals are joined by standard gauge - but we're still left out in the cold. Just as we have been in so many other ways - like lower Commonwealth capital works spending here than in any other State - or 'Stop-Go' economic policies that always damage South Australia far more than any other State.

With Rail Standardization, however, it did seem last

year that we were getting somewhere. That was when the Commonwealth commissioned consultants to plan the kind of standard gauge line that should join Adelaide to the new Indian-Pacific standard gauge system.

And this is the report they produced - the Maunsell Report. It has been accepted by the Commonwealth Government and by the previous Government of South Australia.

The Maunsell Report proposes an entirely new standard gauge railway line from Adelaide to a point on the Port Pirie - Broken Hill standard gauge line, just east of Crystal Brook. The existing broadgauge track from Salisbury to Port Pirie would be removed. There would be a small spur line to service the Lochiel Salt Industries, the line to Kadina from Snowtown would be converted to standard gauge, and a separate standard gauge link would be built to Wallaroo.

In the metropolitan area, it recommends a new standard gauge freight yard at Islington, a connection to the Pooraka Abattoirs, a line to Gillman and Port Adelaide, and a connection to the Adelaide passenger station. As for costs, the Report estimates \$42½M. - while the State Railways Commissioner says \$46M. But the unfortunate thing about all these grand plans is that they won't help Adelaide industries at all.

Apart from the Fertilizer Industries at Wallaroo, John Lysaght at Wingfield and the British Tube Mills at Kilburn, not one major manufacturing industry will be connected to this line. Goods from Tonsley Park, Elizabeth, Woodville, or the Mile End Freight Yards, would all have to be transported by broad gauge to Islington, and then be either cross loaded or undergo bogie-exchange just as happens now at Port Pirie. In addition, traffic to and from the east would have to travel some twenty two miles extra.

Although these proposals have been accepted by the Commonwealth Government and the previous State Government for South Australia's industries, they are quite disastrous.

When the proposals were shown to the South Australian

Railways Commissioner, Mr. Fitch, he set out to find a better scheme, one designed to help our industries, not hinder them.

He discovered that for a total expenditure of \$40,550,000 - \$5M. less than the Maunsell Scheme - the existing broad gauge line from Adelaide to Port Pirie could be converted to standard gauge. Standard gauge could also serve Wallaroo, Snowtown, Gladstone, Wilmington, Quorn, Peterborough and Orroroo - while in the city Adelaide, Mile End, Tonsley Park, Dry Creek, Pooraka, Gillman and Port Adelaide, and Woodville and Elizabeth could all have access to standard gauge services, and they of course are our main industrial areas. The Commissioner discovered that his Department's scheme on every point was either cheaper or quicker, and that over a period a saving of \$10M. could be expected with operating savings of up to \$204,000 each year.

His detailed report was sent to the previous State Government - but for some reason which we cannot fathom it was never acted upon. The Commonwealth was at no point made aware of the true situation.

On taking office, we discovered this and accordingly I have written to the Prime Minister. I pointed out that acceptance of the Maunsell Report will not solve Adelaide's rail transport problems at all - and that senior Commonwealth and State rail officers should begin immediately assessing the alternative, cheaper and more efficient South Australian scheme.

This is one of the things I'll be talking about at the Premiers' Conference. Another will be how the current credit squeeze has severely restricted liquid capital, causing a drop in the sale of new motor vehicles of some 10% already. Mr. Gorton, amazingly, denies that there is anything like a credit squeeze - and so perhaps he simply hasn't informed himself of the effect his policies are having in South Australia. As I said, we'll be talking hard about these things in Canberra, because it is my Government's aim to make South Australia self-sufficient not only in industrial services like rail transport, but also with diverse employment opportunities that won't be affected by the economic conditions in other States.